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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

11 January 1980

MEMORANDUM

NICARAGUA: Export of the Revolution--The First Six Months

The Sandinistas have trained, advised, and probably armed revolutionaries in El Salvador, although their commitment has been tempered by their preoccupation with the domestic situation in Nicaragua, confusion over political events in El Salvador, and a wish to placate antipathetic military governments in Honduras and Guatemala.

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Shortly before the fall of former President Somoza last July, a faction of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN)--prompted by revolutionary zeal and their debt to Salvadoran leftists--pledged arms, combat personnel, and financial aid to the Salvadoran Popular Liberation Forces (FPL). From that point, however, Nicaragua's support ebbed and flowed according to circumstances. By October, the hostility of the Honduran military and renewed counterrevolutionary activities by former members of the Nicaraguan National Guard in Honduras made Managua increasingly uneasy about a military threat from the north and wary of antagonizing its neighbors.

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This memorandum was requested by the National Security Adviser to the President. It responds to specific questions and is not intended to be an analysis of the overall Nicaragua-Cuba relationship. It was prepared by the Latin American Division of the Office of Political Analysis under the direction of the National Intelligence Officer for Latin America, and coordinated with the Clandestine Service. Information in this memorandum reflects information available through 11 January.

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With the advent of a reformist regime in El Salvador in mid-October, the FSLN--together with Cuban representatives--cautioned Salvadoran militants that continued violence might provoke a rightist coup and suggested that radical groups unify in planning for future insurrection. [redacted]

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[redacted] the FSLN may have promised to supply arms and political support. Meanwhile, the Nicaraguans signed a nonaggression pact with the new Salvadoran junta, underscoring their accommodation by citing their arrest the previous week of 19 Sandinistas who were enroute to join Salvadoran revolutionaries. [redacted]

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In spite of the FSLN's pragmatic reactions to events--and the uncertainties that to some extent guide its policy with regard to Central American revolutionaries [redacted]

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[redacted] it has provided military instruction and arms to the Salvadoran left. [redacted]

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[redacted] November [redacted]

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[redacted] the presence of small numbers of FSLN advisers with Salvadoran leftist organizations; we believe, however, that most--if not all--of these were probably inveterate Nicaraguan revolutionaries who volunteered without the approval of Sandinista leaders. [redacted]

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That the FPL for the first time began using bazooka-like weapons and Israeli-made Galil rifles in September lends credibility [redacted] Nicaragua has also furnished arms--including Chinese-made grenade launchers--to Salvadoran leftists. Last month, \$500,000 worth of arms reportedly arrived in Honduras aboard three light aircraft to be smuggled by the Honduran Communist Party (PCH) to groups in El Salvador and Guatemala. [redacted] believe that the arms transited Nicaragua, that Cuba was directly involved in planning the operation, and that additional shipments will be forthcoming. Moreover, a recently formed, FPL-led leftist alliance--which intends to intensify the struggle against the junta--will reportedly receive additional military assistance from Nicaragua and Cuba. [redacted]

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There is little to indicate that the FSLN is assisting insurgents in Guatemala, which offers neither El Salvador's possibilities for revolutionary change nor Honduras' potential military threat.

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CUBA-CENTRAL AMERICA: December-January

Havana continues to work to establish clandestine support mechanisms for insurgents in El Salvador. Arms of unspecified, but probably Cuban, origin are reportedly being flown into Honduras and delivered by land to El Salvador and Guatemala. Cuba continues its attempts to purchase a small Costa Rican air charter service which will be used for clandestine materiel deliveries to leftist forces in El Salvador and elsewhere in Central America.

In mid-December, Castro reportedly repeated his advice to leftists in El Salvador to stop harassing the junta and unite in preparation for a seizure of power this year.

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Castro's personal intervention indicates that Havana sees El Salvador as the most promising target for further revolutionary gains in Central America.

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1 - NIO/LA
3 - Production Staff
3 - PPG
3 - Bruce Clarke
1 - C/LA
1 - DC/LA
1 - Cathy for country file
1 - analyst
1 - OPA/Front Office
3 - one for each branch

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